TRUTH
NOT LEGEND
REASON
NOT SUPERSTITION

Lewis B. Seltzer

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By Louis B. Seltzer

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CHAPTER I

In any discussion having to do with the exploitation of newly discovered or but half acknowledged truths, or with the demolition of errors long established, and whose origin antedates the emancipation of the human mind from the fetters of the ignorance and superstition essential to the control of a bigoted and tolerant church, two fundamental principles must be recognized.

First:—The accuracy of all statements made, a logical sequence in the presentation of the arguments, illustrations both apt and convincing, and the establishing of a heart interest on the part of the readers, which interest can only be created by their conviction of an absolute belief in his utterances on the author's part. In other words, having the argument, its power to convince, and to convert, must always remain in exact ratio to the sincerity with which it is presented.

Secondly:—Granting the correctness of the

premises on which the argument is founded, are the truths and theories advanced helpful or inimical to those accepting them? Will their adoption tend to the uplifting of human kind or to its greater uneasiness and despair? Does the world need and is it ready for the change?

Bearing always in mind these requirements as essential to the successful advocation of the suggestions hereinafter advanced, we may proceed with a reasonable hope of establishing in the reader's mind an interest sufficiently strong to induce his ultimate co-operation with us in our progress toward a higher, broader and unfettered human life.

We have entered a new era. The age of superstition, of faith in traditions and legends, is rapidly passing away. Only those whom the church is able to hold in ignorance, can be deceived. There are thousands of people today, not necessarily college graduates, who cannot be deceived. They read and study for themselves; and to conceive of a human being as ever having been God, or of God as ever having been a human being, is to them a mental condition bordering on the irresponsible. There are thousands of good people, many

nominal church members and assuredly not atheists, who believe in an omnipotent, supreme Ruler, but do not fear Him, do not worship Him, and have no hope for a future life, neither do they credit the promise of a future reward for the good, nor an eternal punishment for the wicked; because they cannot believe that the Bible is God's word.

What we need—we, who believe as these people do—is a church, a clergy, that will preach the truth, that there is no revealed word of God, but that there is a just God who will reward the good, and punish the wicked; a church that will accept the conscience as the word of God, and the Bible as the will of God, and Jesus as our example for the proper mode of life for a Son of God to lead, the brotherhood of the human family, and not of a creed, or of a people. This is the kind of church we need to guide the thinkers, the liberal minded, and keep them in the path of rectitude.

As an illustration, let us consider the arguments and opinions of a common man, a miner, a toiler in the bowels of the earth. There came to Preston No. 5, some time during the eightys of the last century, two young men who started to work one of the breasts

in the mine. The taller of the two was an expert miner, the other was his helper. The helper was one of the most highly educated men that ever came to this place. He brought with him a fine library and numerous manuscripts of his own composition. Yet there was something very mysterious about this person. Every one coming in contact with him realized this. They watched him wherever he was and many were heard to say, "Wait and see, you will find that there is something unusual about that person." He was always ready for an argument, and every afternoon as the miners gathered at the bottom after the day's work and while waiting for a car to be hoisted to the surface, they would ask him to explain how mining should be conducted scientifically, and often he would argue with them on various subjects. Monday was always a great day for argument on religion. After having been to church on Sunday, and listened to the sermon, there was always something to criticize. There was none worse on religion than myself. I had a big opinion of my knowledge on this subject and indeed was pretty well booked on the Bible, but soon learned how little I knew.

CHAPTER II

The following was not his first argument, but it was the first that I took down. It was started by some one saying: "I heard the best damned sermon yesterday I ever heard."

"What was the subject? What was it all about?"

"I have forgotten the text, but the theme of the sermon was unbelief."

"How can you be a church member, or a christian and use profanity? No man should be profane and least of all a christian. While I am an infidel, I yet claim to be a christian and would never think of permitting myself to use such vulgarity."

"An infidel christian, is that what is called a paradox?"

"Let it be what you choose to call it. I know that profanity and christianity do not mix."

"But an infidel denies that there is a God, and therefore cannot be a christian."

"The atheist does not believe there is a God, but an infidel does, though he does not believe that the Bible is God's word. The existence of God is to me indubitable."

"In your opinion, what will God appear to us to be like when we get to see him—when we get to Heaven?"

"How can God be visible to us? God is everywhere, and it is impossible for him to be at one spot a visible being, and at the same time be everywhere."

"But is it not the opinion of almost all intelligent people, that we will see him after our death?"

"If we have more than one God we may see one or more."

"But we claim to have but one God and He a spirit everywhere present."

"The Jews have but one God, but He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and as is remarked, a person dwelling in a City having Golden Streets and Jasper Walls."

"The Jews have always been fond of gold."

"Yes, they have always been money getters, yet they took time to study their relationship to God."

"The Jews were monotheists, but they did

not understand it, for to them God did make Himself visible; He appeared to Adam, Enoch, Moses, Elihja and others, and yet the Bible says, no man can see God and live."

"The Bible would then contradict itself?"

"It certainly does, not only here, but in different places. The Jews were God's chosen people, and He their God only, and not of other peoples."

"So you think the Jews thought that God had no use for the Gentiles? It appears to have been so, and that shows how ignorant they were at that time."

"But how much more intelligent are we? We believe that God was a human being at one time, or that a human being was God at one time. We believe that Jesus, a Jew, was God when He lived. But in fact, the christians have three Gods. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit."

"If Jesus was not God, he was the Son of God."

"Yes, and so are we the Sons of God. Jesus was perhaps the most humane and sympathetic, and in every way one of the best men that ever lived, but it is too simple, too childish,

too foolish to imagine that he was the Supreme Ruler of the Universe."

"But the Bible asserts that he was, and that He was the Son of God."

"I know it does, and it seems to me very absurd, it seems to me an impossibility. He must have been his own father, but He does not claim to have been God, which I am sure He would have done if He had thought so."

At this time a car was waiting for us and we went home. Arguments like the foregoing were an almost daily occurrence; not always on the same subject, not always on the Bible, but on mining, on citizenship, on socialism, or hygiene or any subject that suggested itself. But I confined myself to religion only in my notes that I propose to present here.

At our next meeting I said, "What do you know today?"

"Let me talk to you about God again, as a diversion today. The very ancient in their wars, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say in their feuds, viewed the successful party as having been aided by the Gods. The leaders of the victorious must have been in league with some invisible power, with some spirit or God, or they had the power to com-

municate with God who assisted them. Moses assumed this role, and so did Joshua. God gave Joshua instructions to kill or drive out all the inhabitants of Palestine. While the Jews were too far advanced in intelligence and civilization to believe Joshua to have been a God, they still believed that he could communicate with God, and that God assisted him in his struggles with the enemy."

"God assisted Joshua in robbing the Philistines of their homes because He was the God of the Jews, and their enemy was His enemy."

"But the less civilized people of an earlier period, when the leader of a tribe died after having triumphed over the enemy, thought he must have been a God, and the followers sought to consult with his spirit. They sought and implored his spirit for aid in their wars."

"It was in this way that man was led to ancestor worship, and idol worship."

"But with nearly all peoples, as with the Jews, there was an invisible, all-seeing eye above them. This invisible spirit or power they were anxious to discover—to behold. Man has invented many theories to accomplish this. Many assertions were made that individuals had accomplished this. But Man

has never found anything more definite about God, this great Power, than that which nature reveals to us. All nature proclaims an All Wise Creator, and an ever present Sustainer. All nature asserts that there is a God. But the human eye cannot see a spirit, nor can a spirit communicate with Man."

"While we feel positive that there must be a great first Cause, a Supreme Ruler, a God, who deserves of our adoration, yet we cannot teach our children, truthfully, that any one particular mode of worship, or any particular denomination among the many, has the preference, or approval of God. Nor can we prove that those who do not worship at all, if they live a life of chastity, honesty and humanity, offend God.

"Yet we feel that God's many blessings should prompt us to reverence and adore him, and teach our children to do the same. If God did so control men, inspire them, that they wrote what He desired them to write, if God can control men and make them do such good deeds, is he not unjust if he does not control men or lead men that are inclined to do evil acts?"

"That is my opinion. God would be unjust

if He permitted a man to do wrong, if He could prevent it, and afterward punish him for his misdeeds."

"If it is wicked to be an infidel, why does not God control such persons, and lead them to become believers? Why does He not control me and prevent me from offending Him, in making this refutation of the Bible as His word? I am sure I desire to be good, and to honor Him, and please Him, just as much as any one. I cannot understand why it should make me wicked, to doubt that which to me is not true, even if my neighbor accepts it to be God's word."

"I am convinced my neighbor is mistaken, and feel justified in expressing my convictions, by making use of my mental faculties, of my reasoning powers that God has given me, I have convinced myself that we have no word of God, and I can not see that I should be offensive to God for this, especially if He can control us."

"I am sure God can control an infidel just as well as He can inspire and control any one else."

"God is not almighty if He can control and inspire one person and not another."

"God is the same yesterday, today and forever."

"God is no respector of persons."

"If God was able to appear to man, make Himself visible, in the past dark ages of superstition, He is able to appear to us at the present time."

"Even if we do not see God, we see His love for us, and His kindness toward us all around us, and it is our duty to recognize and acknowledge His kindness. God's love is manifested in giving us the five senses, and it behooves us to be thankful for these blessings, but above all those, the sense of consciousness, the voice of God to us, to guide us in paths of rectitude is perhaps the greatest of all blessings."

"This voice of God, our conscience, makes us humane; we see in our fellowman the brother."

"And there will be no greater blessing for the human family to enjoy than that which will eventually result in the establishment of a true universal brotherhood. Such a brotherhood will banish cruelty, which is savagery, and strifes and most of the suffering from us forever."

"But we also behold God's goodness in the

innumerable blessings that He gives us through nature."

"We feast upon the beauties of nature all around us every day with our wonderful eyes. And upon the sweet fragrance and upon the delicious taste of the many various fruits and upon the soothing music of birds and instruments, sufficient to wake in us an unceasing flow of praise and gratitude and a true worship of God."

"These wonders, and this love of God manifested toward us must be taught our children."

With these words I started for home.

CHAPTER III

When we met again I asked him what he thought of Jesus.

"The self sacrificing and heroic work of Jesus, and of the martyrs for conscious convictions, have been to us of the greatest value, and this should be impressed upon the minds of our children."

"It was through these that we have made such great strides in civilization, and as we are apt to retrograde and become heathens again, their good deeds and sacrifices must always be kept before the people."

"It is therefore of the utmost importance that we be united into a brotherhood, into a Church, into a body to reverence and honor God, and teach our children to do the same. That is what God created us for, to become more intelligent every day, to become more humane and brotherly and to teach our children and assist each other in bearing and performing our duties to God."

"That is my conception of the whole matter."

"God is love. All nature, all creation proclaims this, and this love toward us, His most intelligent creatures, calls forth our deepest, most heartfelt gratitude, and awakens in us a sense of our obligation to worship, to adore, and to reverence Him."

"If God is love, which I believe is true, what about the terrible accidents and the fearful suffering that we have all around us continually?"

"Yes, I know, we have ills, and at times some of us are most terribly afflicted, and some have at times most excruciating pains on account of diseases and accidents, but these are not visitations of God's wrath. It is only the ignorant and superstitious that believe that God gets angry at us, and seeks to punish us by such dire afflictions."

"It is most always our own fault. By our ignorance, self-abuse, and folly, and by our indifference and carelessness, we bring most of our suffering upon us."

"It is true that God made it possible for us to suffer, and he knew when he created us that we would have to suffer at times, but this is necessary to teach us our dependence on Him,

and it brings us to realize and value His blessings, and recognize His love toward us, which we would not comprehend otherwise."

"We suffer because we, or our fellow men, have violated the laws of nature, or on account of accidents. God is not responsible for our misdeeds, nor for our diseases or accidents. We violate the laws of nature because we are ignorant, and evil results follow as a consequence."

"If we were more civilized, we would have less paupers, and consequently much less suffering, for most of our suffering could be averted if we were properly educated."

A car being ready we went to the surface and when we touched upon the subject again I asked him about sociableness.

"If we realized more how much we are dependent upon each other, we would associate much more, and consult with each other much more. We should be a universal brotherhood, organized to assist each other, and educate the children and the illiterate, and to honor and reverence God."

"The savage were such, because they were ignorant and because they were ignorant they were cruel. Ignorance leads to cruelty, and

cruelty is savagery. So then, it behooves us to seek to attain the highest and best education, and to assist our brothers, our fellowmen to attain to the same plane of sociability."

"Education has revealed to man the fact that idols are inert and powerless, inanimate and devoid of potency, simply matter devoid of life."

"Education has discovered to us, though an impalpable, and intangible an all pervading power or life, and this life or spirit is our God."

"We believe in a God that permeates the Universe as our life permeates our body, and not in an anthropomorphous being."

"Is it your opinion that God can lead the intelligent better than the illiterate?"

"God has established the laws of nature to control us, and everything else, and it is by these laws that we are controlled, and not directly by God."

"This planet has been here a long time—millions of years, and when Man first appeared here he must have been very ignorant, but God, by the laws of nature, led him from one plane of civilization upward to another, a higher, until we have reached our present stage. But before this world was created,

Man or a similar creature was in existence. The stellar Universe is here from eternity and so is Man, or intelligent beings."

"But how could Man exist if there was no world?"

"From eternity how many worlds may have been here, and passed away, is hard to tell. But we must believe that as a solar system, occupying the same space as that occupied by our solar system of today; became exhausted and turned into chaos, it reformed and a new system was the result.* And it is only natural that man, or a similar creature, occupied at least one planet of each system. It is my opinion that intelligent beings are not only found on this planet, but upon innumerable other bodies, made for the sustenance of life, throughout the entire stellar universe."

"By that argument the Bible story of the creation of all things about six thousand years ago is entirely repudiated."

"Yes, that certainly is a story. In this age of intelligence and knowledge, it does not require much study to convince one that it can not be entertained. Man may have inhabi-

*The duration of eternity.

tated this earth more than fifty millions of years already."

At this time we separated again.

At our next meeting I called his attention to the assertion that man was here for so long a period and is only now emerging from savagery.

"That is a fact, but when we study the thing over a little we can only see it in that way. Want is the mother of invention, and as primitive Man had but few wants he made but little progress in inventions. He made no improvements as long as he felt the need of none. The more the population increased, and the more dense it became, the more the inventive trait developed and new modes of providing for himself and of protecting himself and family were devised."

"He had the same mental capacity then that he now has, but as long as he was not compelled to improve himself he made no efforts to do so. But as soon as difficulties arose he tried to overcome them by new inventions, and where he was unable to overcome them, he instinctively sought the aid of a higher power. Here was the nucleus of religion and of civilization."

"If, when he sought the aid of a higher power he succeeded in overcoming his difficulty, his prayer had been answered."

"It was evident that he could influence this superhuman power, and after his death his spirit was sought at his grave, and implored to aid the survivers in their struggles."

"To be able to protect his grave, and find the correct spot, a marker was placed to it, perhaps a stone or some other object. While some worshiped the dead ancestor, others forgot the buried person, and worshiped the stone marker, establishing both ancestor and idol worship."

"Don't you think that God did often answer their prayers?"

"No, I do not believe that God will answer the prayer of any one."

"God has made us free agents, and will not help any one because he prays."

"In this respect Man is superior to the animal. We know wrong and can do it. Man can do wrong if he chooses."

"Adam chose to do wrong, and fell; so do we fall when we do wrong."

"We admit that all deliberate wrong doers should be punished. As we are made in the

image of God, and as we punish wrong doers, so will God who has made us, punish us."

"We can, therefore, expect nothing but punishment from Him for our deliberate evil deeds. We know what is right and it is our duty to do it. We do pardon evil deeds when the act was unintentional or accidental, and this is what we may expect from our Heavenly Father who knows the very motives of the heart."

The time for separation had arrived.

CHAPTER IV

At our next meeting the same subject being under consideration he said:—

"It is an undeniable duty to honor God by a life void of offense toward God."

"What about the atheist?"

"The atheist does not believe that there is a God, and to teach a man that he is not responsible for his acts to a higher power, is to make the evil inclined a worse being than an animal. Nothing is too mean, too low, too brutal for a character having no fear of punishment. The atheist must be an abnormal thinker. For this reason has God made us conscious of His presence and conscious of the wrong of evil acts, and made us to fear His wrath."

"Conscience is God's voice."

"How was it that primitive Man could not understand God's voice? If conscience is God's voice, they had a conscience?"

"The untutored savage could not compre-

hend an invisible God; to them it had to be something tangible, something palpable. Yet he had a certain fear, a partial conception of that voice."

"But God, in our creation, had not intended that we should know all these things. Man was given a mind; he must develop his mind, he must discover and invent. While Man in the savage stage had the mental capacity just as we have, he had not discovered that God is an all pervading spirit, nor had he developed mentally far enough to understand his relationship to such a God."

"When we study it over, the heathen must be very dense to imagine that they might derive benefit from worshipping idols."

"Some of us accept unto ourselves Jesus, a man, as God. We pray to Jesus as the great God of the Universe. Is that any better?"

"If Jesus is not God is it wrong to worship Him?"

"No, but it is very foolish; what is it to God what or who you worship?"

"What God expects of us is a correct life, chastity, honesty, humanity. If we were not intelligent beings, we would not commit sin."

"It is our knowing it, when we do a wrong

act, that makes it a wrong, or a sin. We intelligent creatrues are conscious of the fact, when we do wrong, and cannot escape this consciousness, this God's voice that is a monitor to keep us from falling."

"By our intelligence we know that when we steal a thing we need not work for it, but it is also by our intelligence that we know that it is wrong to steal and so God knew in the creation that Man as an intelligent creature would also often be a wicked creature."

"By your argument it seems that God desired that we should be evil doers."

"The All Wise God knew that some of us would be wicked, but he does not desire that we should sin. By the laws of nature God controls all things. It is natural for us to do wrong, even if it requires of us to stifle our conscience, and we naturally know it when we do a wrong act. We free agents might do better, but we yield against better judgment, against conscious convictions of wrong doing, and follow the natural inclination and do the wrong, especially when we can derive some material benefit from it."

"Man, to ease his conscience, makes laws legalizing the taking of his neighbor's goods,

but God does not approve of such laws, nor does he absolve the perpetrator and violator of his laws."

"Why did God put the temptation to do wrong before us?"

"It is necessary for us to have the evil present, otherwise we would not recognize and appreciate the good."

"By adversities we learn to value blessings; by sickness we learn to value health and to protect and take care of ourselves; by accidents we learn to fear and avoid danger."

"The All Wise God has made all things for our good."

"It is a great blessing to be intelligent, but it brings with it its responsibilities. If we were not so we would not be conscious of trouble, we would never worry about evil and misfortune; we could not be sinners."

"As much as it is in our power, we should make it impossible for evil, adversity, enmity, cruelty, diseases, fraud and all such things that tend to disquietude, to exist."

"It seems to me that the Church should expose all evil and all evil doers."

"That is what the new Church will do. We will be a universal brotherhood as far as

possible. We will be true christians, as Jesus taught and gave us an example of what we should be."

"What is, in your opinion, a true christian?"

"The true christian is one who does just as Jesus did and as He taught us to do, or as the Bible says that He did and taught."

"We should do to others as we would have them do to us; love our neighbor as ourselves, do just exactly right. And when finally the great account book is opened, conscience will reveal to us our past life at last, and we all will be judged accordingly."

"So you mean to tell me that our conscience is not only God's voice to us, but that it also is God's book of remembrance?"

"Yes, it is all that, and more, for our conscience is also our guide, our monitor, to keep us from falling."

"It is for this reason that we must have schools. We must be educated to be able to act intelligently. We must have schools and churches, teachers and preachers, Sunday-schools and libraries, religious or sacred and scientific books of all kinds to aid us in learning to understand what God desires of us, and it

will be our duty in all diligence to seek to observe it."

"You seem to think that an education is necessary to a man's salvation."

"I certainly do, every man must be educated to be what God intended him to be. We cannot help but see that God would have us to be intelligent and enlightened, a universal brotherhood, all equal as near as possible, all evil and suffering banished as much as possible."

"You have an idea that Man can attain that intelligence that he will be able to banish all diseases and suffering?"

"Yes, I am sure if each individual is properly educated from childhood up, raised in such an hygienic atmosphere, and receives proper nourishment, shelter and protection, such as intelligent parents can give their children from infancy, and assisted by a universal brotherhood in the rearing and educating, that diseases can be almost totally banished, barring old age or the wearing out of the body."

"It is very encouraging to see so many parochial schools if only the instructors were less bigoted."

"It is a deplorable fact that so many of our

preachers and teachers do not seek to enlighten the pupils, do not seek the welfare of their fellow men, but only the remuneration for their service."

"They are more concerned about keeping them in ignorance so as to be able to control them, make them bigots so as to retain them as church members, teaching false doctrine."

"What is the false doctrine that you claim they teach?"

"One is that Man was made for Heaven. This life is only to fit and prepare us for the life to come; another is that Man is born a sinner and unfit for Heaven, and must make an atonement, or must have some one to make an atonement for him; and another is that any crimes that we commit will be forgiven if we ask God for Jesus sake to forgive us; and another is that the Church of which we are members, we are the body, is the only true Church, making us bigots."

"It is very evident that Man was made for this earth, for we love this earth, everything is to our taste, and we loath to leave it. Therefore, Man should be fitted, the best way possible to occupy the position and place for which he was intended. We would remain here forever

if we were permitted. In fact we are continually searching for a serum to destroy the germs that kill."

"By the laws of nature the body becomes worn out and unable to sustain life, but we fight to the end to remain here."

"Do you think that can be accomplished?"

"I am afraid not, but reincarnation is not untenable."

"But if we were to come back again, live again in a body or if we have been here before, future punishment would not be, or is not meted out to us, for we are not conscious of any past life, or of any past life acts."

"That is true and yet reincarnation answers every question better than any other theory."

"God is not a despotic monarch that desires millions of millions of worshippers around His Throne."

"If God had intended us for angels He would have made us as such. We were intended for this earth and cannot qualify too well for it. If each newborn is a new life to live forever in Heaven or Hell, both places must be very full. But if each newborn is only the reincarnation of a former life, there is no increase."

"And while this is a possibility, let us so

live that if we come again, we may come free of all sinful inclinations, void of bad habits, so that we may deserve greater blessings than we have enjoyed this time. And so that we may be of greater usefulness each successive return."

"The human family is getting wiser each generation, the wicked as well as the good. To which class do we belong?"

"Are we doing our best to be good and useful?"

"Everlasting life would be desirable, but not everlasting idleness. Everlasting life right here on earth. Everlasting rest would soon become a punishment to us active beings. The mind must be employed at least. And we would not be ourselves if we were to be transformed into a different being, into a non-active being, and this life of probation would be a farce."

"If we were to live forever doing nothing, without pleasure, without music and musical instruments, which require work to play, or without entertainments or vehicles, which require work to enjoy, or without some of the good things to eat and drink, and books to read, all requiring work, it would soon become

to us the worst kind of punishment. Man was made to be active both physically and mentally."

"Man has all the possibilities for development, and is ambitious and should not be satisfied unless he is able to do something worth while."

"Heaven, as the present Church believes, is not the abode of the active, but a place of rest."

"To the new Church, Heaven starts right here and will be to each one very much what we make it."

"Let us bring it to ourselves and our brothers in all its possible fullness."

"Heaven is within us. We, the sons of God, are the Creators of it, so if we do not repel it, we are in it, and can keep within it all through this life, and have it in the life to come."

"By all means let us strive for Heaven."

At this time we took the cage for the surface.

CHAPTER V

At our next meeting I said:—"What is your opinion about the animal? Is the young the same, mentally, as the child?"

"No, indeed, the animal with instincts is born with a brain the counterpart of the mother's. It knows all the mother knows as soon as it is born, and it knows all it ever will know almost as soon as it is born. The brain of the infant is a blank and must learn everything that it ever will know."

"Yes, there seems to be a vast difference, but as long as our attention is not called to it, we do not notice it so much. The animal knows how to help itself, and how to avoid danger, as soon as it is born, but the child is entirely helpless. Yes, there is a vast difference. The infant must develop its mind; it must learn everything that it ever will know, but the infant has the ability to learn and the animal has not, or but very little."

"The mind of the infant may be neglected, or it may be developed in a wrong direction. The child may be educated to a certain extent, but may be dishonest or cruel, or immoral. The environments have a great effect on the young mind. Great care should be exercised in the selection of the teacher. The teacher should be capable, honest, and sincere, and so impart knowledge and direct the mind, that the child as it grows up may become intelligent, honest, moral and a useful member of society. The instructions should be such that the child will be able to select for itself the Church that seems to it the most proper in its mode of worship."

"Should not the mother then, the infant's first teacher, be a well educated person?"

"Certainly, the mother should not only be educated and know how to direct the mind of her infant, but she should understand how to nourish and protect the body, so that it will become vigorous and fit for a well developed mind."

"Will education help us to discover what is in store for us in a future life, do you think?"

"I do not think that we will ever be able to know what comes after this life."

At this point they started for home.

The first opportunity I had to open on the subject again, I said:—"The Church offers pardon to all. Will God honor the Church, and grant a pardon when the whole Church prays for it?"

"That is a delusion. To commit crime and expect the Church to be able to absolve us, and free us of the punishment due us, is the height of folly. There was a time when Man believed such things, and there may be some who believe it yet, and there are a whole lot that try to believe it because the Church teaches so, but they are only deceiving themselves, for their conscience tells them differently, and the intelligent and truly honest know that it is only a delusion."

"If Jesus is not our atonement, if we cannot be pardoned for our sins, of what use are the Churches?"

"They are of more importance than ever before to warn the evil inclined, for while he was told by the Church that his sins would condemn him unless he sought pardon, the new Church will teach that it is dangerous to commit crimes, as there is no pardon promised."

"In the new Church the question will be how have we lived, have we avoided evil deeds, for if we have not we will be punished. The doctrine or form of worship will amount to nothing, sincerity, uprightness and reverence, everything."

"All the different forms of worship, from the lowest depth of ancestor worship and idol worship to the highest form of intelligent christianity, have only been a series of steps, in advancement from a vaguely understood effort to reach and worship the great first Cause, or God, to a full realization of Man's relation to his Maker. Each was one form a little nearer to the correct conception than the other, until christianity was reached, and will continue until the entire human family renders to God a sincere and becoming service."

"Do you think that the human family will ever attain that plane of perfection of service to God, that they will subscribe to one mode of worship, and unite into one universal brotherhood?"

"I do, and why not? Yet I do believe that there will be always some factions or bodies, more devout than others, and some evil doers will always be found. There will be but one

mode or one universal brotherhood, but different bodies using different forms. We have learned to know that it is our duty to lead a righteous, upright, humane, God-fearing life, and to serve God by acknowledging His goodness and loving kindness to us, and feel it our duty to praise Him in song and thanksgiving."

"It is our conviction that reward or punishment awaits every one of us according to the deeds done in the body."

"Under these circumstances it behooves us to live a righteous, God-fearing life, and teach our children from infancy that evil doers will be punished, and good deeds rewarded."

"It is evident that we must have Churches, and Sunday-Schools, preachers and teachers. If we had no Churches and Sunday-schools, the rising generation would soon drift back into barbarity and heathenism. If our children were taught that there was no pardon for crimes committed, but that all criminals must be punished either by us or by God, if they escape us, there would be fewer criminals and less crime. We have too many who depend on being pardoned for any evil deeds, or crimes, they may commit, by only praying to Jesus."

"If they can escape the law, or civil punishment, they have no fear of God's punishment, for they console themselves that as soon as they desire God's forgiveness they need but avail themselves of the atonement of Jesus, and God, for Jesus' sake, will forgive them."

"They make the assertion that God for Jesus' sake forgives us all our misdeeds, our crimes, even if our sins be as scarlet—murder—they shall be made white as snow. This is not good for our children. By such instruction we license crime. It is evident that it was God's object in placing us here that we should use our minds, that we should think, that we should make discoveries and inventions, scientific and religious, so as to produce better methods for our protection, both body and soul. But our education should make us good, true and useful."

"Primitive Man found it difficult to provide for himself at times, because of his lack of knowledge; famine would stare him in the face at times. He lacked tools to till the soil, and also knowledge of how to cultivate it so as to produce food. He had no weapons but clubs and stones. Under such conditions, when he was hard pressed he was led to do one

of two things:—He could steal his neighbors' goods or he could invent new methods of providing for himself. Stealing was the easiest and was generally resorted to."

"Want was his first school master. It lead him to think, to invent weapons; but it lead him also to become cruel and wicked."

"The weapons used to kill game were also used to kill his enemy, his neighbor. So that intelligence led Man to become cruel, or savage, for cruelty is savagery."

Here the argument for the day was dropped.

When the opportunity offered itself again, I asked him if he thought that intelligence or education, led a man to become worse?

"Education may lead a man to become a worse creature than he would have been if he had not been educated. The educated criminal is more to be dreaded than the ignorant criminal."

"If Man had only instinct he would not have become so cruel, so savage and wicked. He would be like the animal. It was his knowledge of how to wreak vengeance that made him so cruel."

"Do you mean to say that as long as a

people is cruel so long do they lack in civilization even if they are educated?"

"That's it. We gauge the civilization of a people by their disposition, the more cruel, the less civilized."

"A people may be intelligent, or cunning, and yet be savage."

"We have overcome that fearful cruelty of crucifying and burning alive, but we do permit our fellow man to suffer for want of bread at times and as long as we, in a land of plenty, can permit such things, so long do we lack in being a fully civilized people. So long as we permit any one to suffer for want of bread or raiment in this land of plenty and often superfluity, so long do we disgrace the name of christianity."

"Would Christ own such a people as His followers, as christians?"

"I doubt very much, unless they could plead ignorance."

"We certainly have made great strides in the direction of civilization, but it is evident we are far from being a fully civilized people yet. It is very evident that the intelligence that led Man to cruelty and savagery, now leads Man to civilization and humanity. The

time will come when humanity and civilization will demand a religion, a christianity that will not permit the suffering of a single soul where it can be prevented, but will help the helpless everywhere.

"The man who has the mental capacity to accumulate will also have the christian spirit. He will devote his superfluous accumulations to the ameliorations of the needy, of those less blessed with mental acumen."

"The christian spirit will be such that the wealthy will be taxed sufficient to raise enough wherewith to relieve all those in distress and need."

"We will have reached a perfect civilization when all cruelty is banished from the world."

"When each one does his duty and idleness is nowhere to be found and the compensation of the employee is sufficient to prevent suffering."

"Here, deviating from the subject temporarily, I requested his opinion on the veracity of Church members."

"I believe that we have many Church members who make statements that they know are not facts, but for the sake of making an impression on the infidel, they say things that

they cannot believe themselves. I would not like to accuse any Church member of telling a falsehood or even of exaggerations. The truth is what we expect in all cases of every one."

"In all our communications and intercourse with our neighbors we should avoid or guard against giving offense by fabrications. To none do we look so much for the truth as to the clergy."

"We hear continual complaints on the part of the clergy about the nonattendance of the male members of the congregation. In my opinion, it is time they should be informed why this is so."

"It is also time that methods of reform should be adopted that will remedy this undesirable evil condition."

"To be frank, we cannot imagine that a class of individuals so intelligent, and usually well educated as the prelates, can be ignorant of the cause, but must believe they fear that the truth would be harmful to the Church. This is impossible, the truth can harm no good cause. I realize that by this intimation we express a doubt of the sincerity and integrity of these individuals. This we are loath to do, yet we

are unwilling to attribute ingorance to them, but why preach falsehood?"

"But if they really and truly believe the myths handed down to us by the illiterate and superstitious of the dark ages to be the truth, we, the common people, do not believe it. And for us to listen to fables when we go to Church is more than we are willing to do, and therefore we remain away from Church. The intelligent preacher should have more respect for the intelligent member than to expect him to countenance such sermons. Every intelligent person will admit that the Bible teaches the best morals and contains the best laws and rules for our mode of living, and each one desiring to please God in this life, and gain a happy future life will adopt them as his guide."

"If I can understand you, it is your opinion that as soon as the truth is preached, the Churches will again be filled by the male members of the Church, or by the common people?"

"That is my candid opinion, for many of our non-church goers love the Church, and recognize its value."

"They say the present Church is a grand and noble institution, and has proved itself a great

civilizer and blessing. It teaches grand truths in its Sunday school, and it stands for morality, chastity and integrity, and for humanity, but mingled with this it teaches some myths as truth. It teaches some falsehoods. When all myths and superstitions are eliminated and the Church teaches nothing but the truth, it will become the greatest blessing and the most valuable institution the human family possess."

"This blessing will manifest itself in the universal attendance and the universal brotherhood it will establish."

Here we separated.

CHAPTER VI

When the next opportunity offered itself, I broached this subject by saying:—"We must be sort of dual beings; the good and the evil are existing in us."

"Not just dual beings, but we do naturally sometimes things that are wrong, and it is, therefore, evident that God designed that Man should also do such good things as writing sacred books; the Bible as such is a guide and its good instructions are for us to follow or observe."

"In your opinion, God did not inspire those old Jews to write the Bible?"

"No, those old Jewish patriarchs in the Bible time were so corrupt and licentious, that when one did a good deed they concluded he must be inspired of God. Environments and circumstances were the governing elements to lead men to do good or evil then, the same as they are now. It was the natural inclination of the writers. I do believe that they thought they were doing the will of God in writing the

Bible, and some may have even felt constrained by God, but God controls no one. Even if they said, 'Thus saith the Lord,' that is no proof that God did say so. It is my opinion that in some cases they concluded the assertion that God had said so, would have the effect on the evil inclined to turn them from their evil inclinations."

"God has created both the weeds and the flowers, the tares and the grain, the good and the bad in all nature, and has designed that some of us should be inclined to evil and some to righteousness, for He is the Ruler, by the laws of nature, of everything, and everything is just as He wants it or desires it to be. God knows all about our constitutions, and capabilities but he does not interfere with our inclinations."

"When He created us, He limited our possibilities and powers; we might have greater or we might have less power, if God had designed it so. We are very much alike and yet are all dissimilar. We all have minds yet we differ very much in mental capacity. We differ in intelligence; some are more intelligent, some are more humane, some more depraved, but there are only a few prodigies."

"There was only one Jesus, one Napoleon, one Moses, one Edison."

"The new Church will still retain Jesus as its head; it will still be christianity, but pruned of superstition."

"The extraordinaries will still lead and the common people will still do the work. Jesus has given us the example and we will follow His example."

"If we are only the ordinary, if we do our duty, we will please God just as well and just as much as the extraordinary."

"The present Church makes worship the essential to please God, the new Church will make humanity, chastity and integrity as the essentials."

"The new religion will require a much better education; it will require a knowledge of hygiene and physics and metaphysics. The new religion will require a better knowledge of chemistry, of the chemical properties of food, and the nutritious value for the infant and the adult of everything prepared for the nourishment of the body."

"According to that, you would make longevity a part of religion?"

"Our bodies were given us to take care of

so as to give the mind the longest time possible to develop."

"So that the preservation of the body, and a knowledge of the cause and source of diseases and the panacea, will be a part of the new religion."

"In the new religion there must be no paupers to breed disease, for the problem of the proper control of the wealth will be a part of the new religion. The new religion will attempt to make this earth so pleasant and agreeable to all, that it will be a heaven to us to be here. The new religion of 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' will tolerate no illiteracy among the normal and healthy, and the abnormal and unhealthy will be reduced to the lowest possible minimum. The new religion will banish war and war implements, all fortifications and armies. The new religion will require us to be just and not shirk our duty in that which has by nature's law, fallen to our lot to do. We will not thwart the Creator's design, and will therefore please Him."

"We will be active. But while activity is all right, it must be that which makes for righteousness, for we may be active in doing wrong. History lauds Napoleon for his heroic

deeds, among them his march to Moscow. The new religion will forget such deeds, or remember them with horror. We speak about our brave army, and of the valor of the Generals of both sides, North and South. The new religion will pronounce it fratricide. Christianity has begun for us a civilization the like of which the world has never seen. Jesus has, in this, indeed been the Saviour of the world, but the new religion will give us a more perfect religion and a more perfect civilization."

"The new religion will not only give us societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals and children, but also to poor, suffering poverty-stricken humanity of all age."

"Do you believe that there are real christians to be found anywhere today?"

"Oh, yes, there are some; there always have been some, but we need a great many more real Christ-like persons. We need more Clara Bartons, Florence Nightingales, Anthony Comstocks and a number of self-sacrificing christians like those, to set us an example. And the so-called christians that have millions while their fellowmen are starving, must be eliminated."

"If we have no paupers, we may have men

of wealth that are christians, but not so long as we have paupers. In fact, we must have some wealthy men to do the business, and some with less mental capacity to do the menial labor. God truly has sympathy for the toiler, and loves him as much as the man of wealth. The wealthy, to be true christians, should be thankful that he is more fortunate to have the mental capacity to accumulate wealth, and have pity for those not so blessed, who must do the menial labor in order to make a living."

"Striving to make it possible for the wealthy to still accumulate more at the loss to the toiler is not in accord with the new religion. The new religion will make no distinction between the prelate and the lay member; there will be no priest worship. While we do not expect the millenium, we do expect that the new religion will improve the condition of the human family just as much again as the present christian Church improved its condition above the pagans."

"The present christian Church claims to have taught this religion of 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' for nineteen hundred years; we can see with what effect. In fact, it has never

been demanded of its members, but the new religion will, and this will eliminate the pauper and the unduly rich."

"The present christian Church claims to be the christian Church because it accepts the superstitions, legends and myths about a human God, for it makes no attempt, or but a very feeble attempt to live as Jesus did, or as He taught that we should live. The new religion will refuse to base itself on the belief that Jesus was God, but it will insist that His example is the proper mode of life, that His teachings as found in the New Testament must be followed by us to be true christians."

"The story that Jesus was God brings with it many perplexities. Jesus, as God, fed five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, and as soon as the multitude was dismissed He went up into a mountain to pray."

"I see; who did He pray to?"

"I could not explain that. Jesus was Man. Jesus was God. How the human could implore the Divine in the same body is too difficult for me."

"To imagine that Jesus prayed to Himself, answered His own prayers, assisted Himself: or was the Divine absent at times? Was He

human for a while and then Divine at other times? These are thoughts that are puzzling."

"It is impossible to answer them and these perplexities make it evident that He was only human. The present christian Church holds that for a man to be a christian he must have the superstitious notion that every word of the Bible is a positive truth, and that God Himself has spoken it through the authors. God exercised that control over the men that uttered or wrote those words, that they said or wrote only just what God wanted them to say or write. They were no more free agents. The new religion will hold that God foresaw the development of Man mentally, and the Bible as a result, with many errors much truth, and some of the best instructions, but not His word."

"And the new religion will insist on a life consistent with the teachings of the Bible.

"The present christian Church claims that all that the Bible requires of us to do for our salvation must be done, or eternal damnation and eternal Hell-fire will be our punishment, but the members lead a life in most cases, as if they believed nothing of the kind."

"The works of the present christian Church

are prayer, paying Church dues, attending the services, and observing the sacraments."

"The works of the new Church will be assisting the needy and destitute, teaching the illiterate and in honoring God by a correct life. The christian will be clean mentally and physically, and will be known for his charitable acts, and will depend on character for salvation. The present christian Church bases salvation on faith and prayer, but the new Church will base salvation on a mode of life as Jesus taught, on humanity, integrity and chastity; in short, character."

"Is that your belief, that to be saved it is necessary to have a good character?"

"Yes, character and a conscience void of offense toward God. Evil will always exist, and among the evil that cannot be banished entirely will be hypocrisy."

"The present christian Church teaches that by our birth, or by evil deeds, or by both, have we become sinners, unrighteous, and nothing unrighteous can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. We are, therefore, unfit for that abode, and of ourselves are powerless to make ourselves fit, or of paying the debt, and are therefore without hope of salvation."

"So Jesus, who always has been a friend of the poor and needy, offers Himself as an atonement for our sins. That is, Jesus the Creator God, offers Himself to Himself as an atonement for His creatures' sins?"

"No, it was Jesus the Son of God that offered Himself to God as an atonement."

"Well, but He is one of the Triune God, and we have only one God."

"This is indeed a mystery. By this theory He is His own Father, and He was His own Son, and yet both are one, the Creator of all things. He died, or was murdered, and by His death He atoned for all our sins—murder, rape and felonies."

CHAPTER VII

At our next meeting, and while we were discussing this subject we had a stranger with us, a new miner. I opened the discussion by saying:—"It seems to me that it makes but very little difference whether we believe that Jesus was God or not."

"Oh, yes it does. Unbelief is the greatest sin Man can commit, that is what the present christian Churches teach. You must believe in the Divinity of Jesus. To doubt, or to dispute it, is a sin; in fact, the most of the so-called christian Churches teach that to disbelieve that Jesus was God is the greatest sin. The man that doubts is surely lost."

"By this doctrine none is permitted to express an opinion not even think it, for a thought that savors of doubt is a sin. You must not use your mind on this subject. Such doctrine fetters the timid on this subject. This is the doctrine of the clergy who were afraid of losing their hold on the people."

"To assert that God does not permit us to think, or to form an opinion, but that we must believe these mystifying assertions, these impossibilities, is foolishness."

"Jesus told the Jews that inhumanity, dishonesty and immorality were the great sins, and they all knew well enough what vast amounts must be charged up to them, and as Jesus had shown His sympathy for the poor and needy, and the oppressed, it required but very little to make them believe that He was superhuman, or that He was the Son of God, the atonement for our sins. They were only too glad to find some way to get rid of their sins."

Here our stranger could keep quiet no longer and said:--"You should not be permitted to make such remarks."

"Suppose you stop me. Suppose you pray for fire to come down from Heaven and consume me. I am sure you are a good, faithful christian, and it says, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father, God, in my name, He will give it you,' and again, 'Ask and ye shall receive,' and again, 'Therefore I say unto you what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.'

God's word cannot lie, so use your power and have me removed."

"It does not mean that we should pray for anything like that."

"But it does not specify what we should pray for, so how do you know what it means that we should pray for? It says, 'If ye have faith as a mustard seed, ye can remove mountains.' 'And all things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall recieve.'"

"Yes, I know it does, but it means mountains of sins."

"That is not what the Bible says. You are too wise; you know what God meant even if He did not say it. I know parents, good christian parents, who prayed for their sick child, as faith only can pray, that God should spare it, and it died after all. And there are many such cases. Does God answer prayer?"

"Sure, God answers prayer. Didn't He answer Elijah on Mount Carmel when he prayed for fire to come down and consume his burnt offering? And again when he prayed for rain?"

"It may be but I doubt it. If God is immutable, it seems strange that He never answers when all the country is praying for

rain, because everything is perishing for the want of it. If He answered Elijah, why does He not answer these? How is it that God does not manifest Himself, appear to us, and explain these things?"

"God did appear in the person of Jesus, and was that not sufficient?"

"But it is only since Jesus was here that we have these perplexities. And the appearing of God in the person of Jesus is only another. Would God adopt such a method to manifest Himself to us? Is it reasonable to believe that God would be born of a woman? If God desired to manifest Himself to Man in those dark ages of superstition and ignorance, why does He not manifest that desire at this time?"

"The people expected that God would appear to them; some even did see Him in the sky. But the Jews, God's chosen people, expected Him to come and dwell with them as their King, but not as the God of the Universe, but the God of the Jews and the destroyer of all others. It was, therefore, not so great a matter for the Jews to believe Jesus was God when they heard that assertion."

"But does it seem logical? Did Jesus, as He was traveling with His disciples from

place to place hold a protecting hand over the sun? Or did He at the same time have a watchful eye over the stars far and near? Or was He only God at certain periods and human at other periods? What good purpose does it serve for us to believe such absurdities, such foolishness?"

"Your arguments are such that those that adopt them are entirely without a Savior."

"I cannot understand why we need a Savior."

"We need a Savior as a mediator between us and our Heavenly Father, as our intercessor with the Father for our sins, as an atonement."

"So your theory is that any one may commit crimes and be pardoned, that is what your Church teaches."

"No, you have no right to commit willfully, crimes, but we all come short of doing what we should do."

"I understand you, then, that Jesus is not our Savior for willful crimes, only for our shortcomings?"

"Well, I am not so sure about that."

"You are not sure what your Church teaches, but you are sure if you are a faithful

member you will go to Heaven when you die."

"My church is the true Church, and if I am a faithful member, I am sure Jesus will save me."

"If you do a wrong and do not know that it is a wrong, it is no crime, and you need no atonement for it. It is the motive that makes an act a crime and not the act itself. For such innocent misdeeds you need no Savior."

"Yes, but a person does things sometimes that he knows he should not do, and for such acts he needs a Savior, one to make an atonement."

"Well, the Church that teaches you that you may commit a crime and an atonement stands ready, a Savior is ready to pardon you, is not a very desirable Church."

"Why is it not a desirable Church? A Church that cannot save you from going to Hell is not a desirable Church."

"The Church that teaches its members that they may commit crimes and be pardoned, is an institution that invites crime. It says that you may commit crimes and yet go to Heaven. Such a Church must be the cause of much of the crimes committed."

"As long as I belong to the true Church, I do not care what it teaches, I am sure of going to Heaven when I die."

"'Consistency, thou art a jewel.' Let me examine your consistency. You believe that your Church is the only true Church, the only right Church, the only Church that saves?"

"Yes, that is correct, my Church is the only Church in which people can be saved."

"So you must believe that God is so cruel that all the other people that do not see it as you do are going to be put into eternal Hell-fire for their ignorance?"

"Not for their ignorance, but for their unbelief."

"But if a man cannot believe as you do, and to believe that God saves only the few that belong to your Church, and consigns all the other millions of His creatures to Hell-fire is not consistent."

"And to believe that the members of other Churches, not the true Church, are saved also, is not consistent."

"Well, I am going to trust my Savior for my salvation, if all the others are lost."

"To believe that your Savior, Jesus a Jew,

was God, or that God was ever a Jew, or a human being, is not consistent."

"If he wasn't God, He was the son of God."

"So are we the Sons of God, and to believe that God could not save the people without a Savior, is not consistent. To believe that God so loved the world—us—that He gave His only begotten Son to save us, or that God died on that terrible cross for our sins, and yet we must make such strenuous efforts for our salvation is not consistent."

"And to believe that God could not save the people until His Son was sacrificed, or unless He saw the blood of His own Son, His own dear boy, flow from the wound where the Roman soldiers hammered nails through the quivering hands and feet, and He was hung on those nails on the cross in the burning sun is not consistent. It seems that I can hear His shrieks, and screams of agony and pain and anguish yet, and His pathetic piteous prayers and cries for mercy must have been simply not endurable to a person of any compassion whatever, and to believe that the Almighty God, able to save to the uttermost, required such cruelty or desired this barbarity, is not consistent."

"That will do. It is what the Bible teaches, and I do not intend to be corrupted by you. This is my last shift here."

"I have no objections, but if the Bible were really God's word, it would not have so many discrepancies, it would agree with science, with astronomy. Scientists declare that the earth revolves before the sun to produce day and night, and they must understand it, for they can tell of eclipses to the minute hundreds of years ahead. And to believe that God would stop the sun, which in fact does not produce day and night effects by its motion, and the moon, and could not destroy a devil that He had created, that causes the people to do evil, for which He will punish them with eternal Hell-fire is not consistent."

At this time the argument for the day was stopped and all started for the surface.

CHAPTER VIII

At our next meeting I asked:—"Would it not be better if we did not argue these questions? We would then not become infidels."

At this two or three chimed in and said:—"We have a right to listen to any argument, and in fact, it is our duty to learn the truth and if we find that the Bible is not the truth, it is our duty to let the world know it, and not try to stifle our conscious convictions."

"If the Jews had never listened to the arguments of Moses and the prophets, we would not have the Bible. If they would not have listened to Jesus, we would not have the New Testament and christianity. But to believe that the Jews were God's chosen people before Jesus was born, although they committed all kinds of crimes, and that now they are all devils, is not consistent."

"Do you think that really some of those good old saints, if saints they were, did according to the Bible deliberately commit murder?"

"Maybe you would not call it murder, because it was not called murder in the Bible, and because it was done by a Bible character?"

"But if a man kills his fellowman what else can you call him but a murderer? But if Moses killed a man, and if he was a murderer, that would certainly disqualify him to write God's word."

"Oh, I don't know; he may still have been able to do good deeds, but it was not God's word that he wrote, only the Pentateuch, and he meant it for the best to kill the man."

"But the Jews are not as good a people now as those were who wrote the Bible, or as good as they were at the time the Bible was written."

"I do not see why not; they should be the same, and if the rest of the world is better they should be better, too. It was only a very few of them who were the instigators of the death of Jesus, only a few considering the great number in Palestine and other countries."

"That is true, there were only a few who accused Him and they did not kill Him. It was the Roman soldiers who crucified Him."

"Certainly, the Jews did not kill Him, and to believe that the Jews who wrote the Bible

in those dark ages, in that time of legend and superstition, and licentiousness and ignorance, were all saints, and that it must be all true, and all God's word because they said so, whether it is logical or reasonable, is not consistent."

"But it was God's voice from Heaven that made the people believe it was God's word."

"Yes, but what proof have we that God's voice was ever heard, but only that the Jews that wrote the Bible said so?"

"To believe that the Bible is God's word, and yet fear that the arguments in scientific books are so much more convincing than the Bible that if we read both, we will become sceptics and infidels, is not consistent."

"The logical reasoning of the Bible if it is God's word, should be so convincing and so conclusive and so strong, that nothing should be able to make us doubt. The arguments of the Almighty and All-wise God should be so strong and convincing that no scientific arguments could make us doubt; in fact, they should agree with each other."

"Yes, but we are free moral agents and God does not attempt to make us believe Him. He does not argue but only asserts it to be so."

"If we are free moral agents and responsible

for our acts, and yet believe that God could control the writers of the Bible, or that He could control St. Paul when he was persecuting the christians, and could not control Tom Paine when he wrote 'The Age of Reason,' we are not consistent."

"God can only control a man when he is willing, when he yields himself to him, when he prays for his help."

"Paul was not praying, and Ananias and Saphira were not praying, and to believe He could do with them as He pleased, and yet cannot control and stop some of the so-called christians when they are committing some of the darkest crimes, but will freely pardon them, is not consistent."

"I suppose God saw in Paul a useful character, something He did not see in others, and therefore threw influences around him that led him to the light."

"But God is no respector of persons."

"To believe that God is no respector of persons, and yet believe that He led Paul to do good and at the same time believe that He instructed Joshua to kill men, women and children when he was robbing the Philistines of their homes is not consistent."

"But the Philistines were an ungodly heathen people, idol worshippers."

"The Jews were not very holy either, and to believe that God has made some so holy that all others must be destroyed, or must become subject to them or their slaves, is not consistent."

"But that is the way; the priest is the holy one and knows it all, and the layman is only an ignoramus. Jesus taught that He Himself was no better than his disciples, that the master should also be the servant."

"The present Church teaches that we may be pardoned, for Jesus sake, for all our crimes."

"That is exactly what the Bible teaches."

"Suppose the Bible does teach it, what proof have we that the Bible knows?"

"It must be a fearful thing to be ushered into the presence of a just God with a conscience accusing us of deliberate crime. The deepest and darkest place in Hades must await the prelates that will assure Heaven to the criminal, for thereby do they encourage crime. They are sending criminals to Hell with the assurance that they are going to Heaven."

"But you do not believe in a Heaven or a Hell."

"Yes, I do, but it is the mental condition, and we are in either Heaven or Hell here already, and will be so in the life to come. In every act we perform, we should put this question to ourselves:—'Will a just God approve of it?' It is true that we are the image of our maker, and the more intelligent, the more nearly like Him, and if we can conscientiously do an act it will stand approved of God."

"As God saw justice, so has He made us, His creatures, to see it. We can only believe that as God is in disposition, so are we, His image."

"I see we all can learn a great deal every day if we but put our minds to work."

At this juncture we started for home again.

One day, soon after this, one of the miners in the breast adjacent to our young Lecturer's, was badly hurt by a fall of coal from the side.

His injuries, though very painful, were not dangerous. Our young Lecturer went over and assisted in bringing him to the gangway.

"He is the most kind hearted, the most self-sacrificing person in the mines," is what all

said. "And so well informed, so well acquainted with the first-aid requirements. He is almost as good as a surgeon or doctor." The man that was injured was a Catholic, but his "buddy" was an infidel and fond of jesting. While they were waiting for a car, and to divert his mind from his pain, the "buddy" said:—"I must relate to you the dream I had last night. I made a trip to the Celestial World; in short, I went to Heaven."

"It didn't do you much good; they wouldn't let you in."

"Oh, yes, they did, I only went as a visitor. At the gate I asked for a ticket to see the place. Peter looked me over, asked some questions, and then gave me a ticket and a guide. We started out and the first room we came to was the Catholic Heaven. There was a great uproar, a great commotion, the better element were trying to eject some of the pardoned criminals that had come from the various jails below, and they were cursing and swearing. It was something scandalous. So we hurried away and went over to the Methodist Heaven. Here it was not much better, perhaps worse. They were accusing one of hypocrisy. Some said he had been drinking

liquor behind the door. The fellow said:—'I had hopes of finding rest here, but it is nothing but trouble. If I were only back on the earth again.'"

"I did not fancy this complaining so we hastened from this place, too. The next was the Spiritualist Heaven. Here they were continually on the go the whole time we were there. This is surely no place of rest. They were forever called down to earth to talk to some friends. One fellow became very indignant, his brother asked him if he didn't steal and sell his gold watch. He said, 'Earth was a better place than this.' That was enough from them so we went to the Negro Heaven. Here they were all in misery, no chicken, no watermelon, nothing just to sit down and mope. The atmosphere was so gloomy that we got away as soon as possible. Our last visit was to the Jew Heaven. We found that they were the most forlorn and miserable of all we visited. Abraham, as one example, started to tell us how long he had been there, over three thousand years and nothing to do, always the same, monotony, monotony. Moses came; he said:—'Egypt was not the worst place to be found, if I had my privilege I would go back today.'

"At that moment Adam and Eve came near and started to lament. 'Here we are, six thousand years doing nothing. If we could only have it as we had it in the Garden, and oh! how will we have to spend the long endless future eternity?'"

"I suppose you must have been dreaming for about two days."

"Oh, no, things pass rapidly in dreams."

"What was the Infidel Heaven like?"

"All as quiet as a mouse; surely this must be the place of rest, but lo, when we opened the door, there wasn't a soul in it."

"All down at the furnace getting warm, I suppose?"

"That may be. The room was empty, that is all I know."

At this the car was ready and we took the man home.

CHAPTER IX

When the subject came up again our Lecturer started out by saying: — "The new Church will be an association of persons, or an institution, the aim of which will be to aid the needy. A body of true christians who recognize their responsibility to teach their fellowmen, so that they may be able to learn what appertains to their temporal and eternal good. A brotherhood in which each is the other's keeper. A Church that will teach that when we sin against ourselves by self-abuse, excesses and gluttony, that we bring punishment, or Hell upon ourselves here in this life and probably in the life to come. And that will teach that when we sin against our neighbors by robbing them, taking from them legally or illegally that which belongs to them and not to us, and by so doing pauperize them, we bring upon them diseases and diabolical and corrupt tendencies that will lead to crimes and pestilence. To be conscious of such acts when we

come to die will be a fearful end. We should stop and ponder, in our haste to gain wealth, whether money will be a Heaven or a Hell to us in the end. It may be a terrible punishment to us in this life and in the life to come."

"I can understand you. You mean to say that sin is the wrong we do to ourselves and to our fellowmen."

"Yes, and the wrong we do to God."

"What should a person know in order to live a true christian life?"

"The new Church will instruct its members to search the Scriptures, not only read it, but to search it for truth. And not only read the Bible, but all Scriptures pertaining to a knowledge of God and His laws, and of Man and his future destiny. By all means should we read scientific works by some called modernism. Some of these are Anthropology, Paleontology, Geology, Pantheology, Mythology and also the Koran and all other so-called sacred writings. The Church has no right to accept any one as a full member until he knows something about these writings."

"By your theory only educated people can become members of your new Church?"

"That is it, but the responsibility rests with

the Church to see to it that every member and every applicant is properly educated. If the Church fails in educating its members, it should not be permitted to exist. The true christian Church is nothing but an universal brotherhood."

"But often the so-called christian Church makes every effort to keep the brother in ignorance to avoid the responsibility of being his keepers, and to become his master in order to rob him. The clergy desires to have the lay brother ignorant in order to have him believe that they are very holy, that they are God's ambassadors, that they are demi-gods, to frighten him into doing anything they require. This peonism lies at the door of the true christian church to banish. The new Church, the true christian Church must relieve these oppressed brothers that are held in bondage by such Churches in order to rob them. This is the great and all important work of the new Church, to fearlessly enter the arena and rescue these oppressed brothers that are down-trodden and ignorant. And not only to rescue, but to educate, enlighten and christianize them. To see our poor, ignorant brothers kept in bondage and ignorance, and

prohibited from making any advancement by forbidding them to read scientific books or hear scientific lectures, and not protest, is a sin and a shame."

"Think of us standing idly by and see men calling themselves servants of God, forbid their fellowmen, their brothers, make use of their God-given faculties is not only a sin but a crime."

The time to separate having arrived, we went home.

At our next meeting I propounded the question of the proper use of our wealth.

"Those that are industrious enough and intelligent enough to accumulate wealth, have a right to enjoy it. If it was accumulated by honest methods, it belongs to them, and they should be permitted to enjoy it. But when we see men having no higher conception of life than to accumulate wealth, only for the purpose of gratifying selfish lusts or amusements, it becomes our duty to preach to them of a higher plane, of usefullness. We should seek to arouse them from their lethargy, and show them their need of self mental improvement, and the need of their suffering brothers. It becomes our duty, as our brothers' keeper, to

reveal to him the possibilities that he possesses of mental development that he may derive real enjoyment therefrom."

"In many of our brothers only the animal nature is alive, the Divine is dormant. Among many of the laboring class the amusements are of the lowest character, drinking and gambling and the accompanying vices. The saloon is the rendezvous for pastime and pleasures. The Church that does not seek to elevate its members above this mode of life is a failure, and a menace to society and civilization."

"It seems to me that you would convert the Church into a school."

"I hold that the Church has no right to have one single illiterate member that has the mental capacity to learn. The Church should endeavor to develop the mind of each individual from infancy up. The Church should endeavor to implant in the young mind the nucleus of a useful life. The Church should seek to imbue each mind with the idea that the improvement and elevation of humanity was required of each member as a service to God, and a duty devolving upon each individual. The present Church,seeing the great importance of educating its members is endeavoring to

meet the requirements through the Sunday-school. The Church, to accomplish any good, and to accomplish its mission, must be above permitting its members to debauch themselves in the liquor business or the excessive use of it as a beverage."

"But the Bible says, 'that which goes into the mouth does not defile, but that which comes out of the mouth.'"

"That is true, the Bible does say so; but liquor causes the filth, the evil to come out of the mouth, and an excessive use of it is an evil and a sin. To call a man a christian or even a Church member that staggers along the street, or rolls in the gutter full of liquor is profanity; it is an affront to God; it is basing a very low estimation on the work of Jesus. And to call a man, if man he really is, that dispenses the liquor, a christian, is worse than profanity; it is to deify the devil, and reverence a demon as worthy of honor."

"But God makes the liquor, or makes it possible for man to make it."

"Yes, and so has he made opium and cocaine, and all the other poisons, and all are for some use, and some very important, or the very essentials in the cure of diseases, but

not to be used as a beverage. God never intended that Man should make use of anything as a beverage that will deprive him of his reason. God never intended that Man should use as a beverage that which affects his brain so that he becomes, for the time it operates on him, an insane being. And to permit men to have their names on the Church roll, and on the Roster, and be permitted to participate in its management, men that stoop so low as to become besotted and degraded by the use of liquor as a beverage, is a blot or stain on the page of our christian civilization. To permit people to imagine that they are christians who get beastly drunk, or who defraud their neighbors, or who stoop to gambling, or who conduct a business that requires the degrading and pauperizing of its patrons for its success, is criminal and to stand by and not protest against such sacrilege, is equally criminal."

"The Church that permits such members on her roll is an institution antagonistic to God, and civilization, and christianity, and is directly engaged in the ruination of men and the destruction of government, and is sending men to Hell."

"The christian Church—falsely so-called—that does not endeavor to educate, elevate and civilize its members, but permits them to engage in a business, or even to patronize such a business as prize fights, with all their gory, degrading and demoralizing scenes, or lottery schemes, taking from the ignorant unjustly, or in any kind of debauchery that demoralizes, is a curse to society and should be removed from the earth. If christianity is only for the purpose of dividing the human family into two classes, the educated wealthy ruling class, and the ignorant pauper class, savagery and heathenism would be preferable."

"The best way to properly educate the people would be to have the Church conduct the public schools."

"A Church or a denominational school cannot take the place of the public school until we become one universal brotherhood. The Church cannot control its teachers that they will not teach, so that the child will not become bigoted. The denomination will not be able to control itself so as to instruct its teachers how to teach the children so that they will not become bigoted."

"It is natural for the Church in conducting

a school to inculcate and influence the child so as to bring it into the Church as a member, and this it cannot do without making the child a bigot. The education of a child should be such that it would enable it to select for itself, at the proper time, the denomination or mode of worship that appealed to it as being the proper one."

CHAPTER X

THE ARGUMENT after having been interrupted by the separation for the day, was again resumed by our young friend saying:—"The child should be taught but very little about the mode of worship, but should be thoroughly familiarized with all the different modes. The child should be taught to think and think logically. The child should be taught that the principal things in the worship of God are honesty, humanity and chastity, and these are the essentials in the identification of the condition of the civilization of a people, for the savages are always filthy, brutal, ignorant and treacherous. By these we judge a people or individual as to the degree of civilization they have attained. In short, the child should be so taught that it would be almost impossible for it to become narrow minded or bigoted."

"I think the most difficult thing will be to find teachers that will teach without trying to influence the child in matters of religion."

"I know that, but where the subject is logically presented in the book, the intelligent pupil will not go astray."

"But the State is the only one able to educate the child."

"The books should be compiled and prepared by thoroughly educated persons, and the teacher should be compelled to teach as the books teach."

The inside foreman, who is always out before any of the miners, was delayed this day, and being with us, and having heard the argument said:—"Don't you believe in Jesus our Savior?"

"If Jesus is our Savior, and He can save us, and we are entirely dependent on Him for our salvation, why should He permit one soul to be lost? If he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to Him by faith, and if He is God, He can keep us from falling, or from sinning, and if Jesus is the Almighty and we can do nothing of ourselves toward our salvation, then he is responsible for our salvation."

"But we do not believe this, for we are a free moral agent, and are responsible ourselves for our actions and according to our acts will our reward or punishment be. For God to

punish us in eternal punishment for that which he could have prevented us from doing is not reasonable."

"But we can do good or evil just as we feel inclined and God does not interfere, and is not responsible."

"And you ignore the Bible also?"

"No, we have the Bible warning us that sinners will be punished, and if we do not heed the warning, and neglect to control our passions, we must abide by the consequences. We can only blame ourselves when on our death bed with deeds which are evil which accuse us. There are a great many people, and among them clergymen, who do not believe that the Bible is God's word, but they are afraid if the truth were to be taught that the christian people would all become atheist, and retrograde into barbarity and heathenism, and commit all kinds of crimes."

"That is it; those who are dubious about the Bible are liable to commit all kinds of crimes."

"That might be the case if they became atheists, but the truth does not make people atheists. If we are not believers in the Bible as God's word, we are, nevertheless, strong believers in a Supreme Ruler, in God. A God

Who is just and will not permit the wicked to go unpunished. We cannot believe that a murderer can go unpunished just because he becomes very penitent and gets on his knees and pleads for pardon. He may escape human punishment, but God knows all things and he cannot escape his punishment."

"I presume from your argument that the Church is a failure?"

"Oh, no, the Church is not a failure. The Church as it is established today is doing a vast amount of good, and it has gone to a very great expense to establish itself on its present basis, and to attack this foundation and destroy it is an awful undertaking, but delicate as the attack may be, and fearful as it may appear, to rob the Church of the illusion of a sinner's Savior, of a human God, the truth must be told, the attack must be made, but not to destroy, only to reform. Those that do wrong must be warned that there is no pardon for criminals. As long as the people did not read and think for themselves, but depended on the clergy to do this for them, this system was all well enough, but since the laity reads and studies the Bible and other books for itself, they see the delusion."

"The clergy is pledged to teach certain doctrines, and cannot deviate from them even if they realize the inconsistency for the denomination holds them to their pledge."

"But the laity is now so universally educated, and able to read and think for themselves, that the truth only will be accepted; this forces the reformation. The conviction that criminals will be punished and not pardoned, arouses in us a desire to warn sinners, so that they may study over what they may contemplate doing. It gives us the courage to tell the truth even at the peril of destroying the foundation of the present Church."

"To neglect to teach the erratic against false teaching and false doctrine, would be entirely wrong. To know the truth, but for fear of enmity of the present Church, to refuse to preach it, would be cowardly and wrong."

"Don't you think God will hear and answer the truly penitent?"

"If God did control the suppliant, and the entirely resigned and truly devoted Church member, some such being surely always found in each denomination, there could not be so many different denominations. There could not be so much animosity and hatred between

them, calling each other heretics, and denouncing each other as teachers of false doctrines. If God did control any of these Church members, and could control any truly penitent, it would not be possible for the Church members to have such savage hearts, and it would be very cruel of God to permit these strifes, if He could control Man and prevent them. For the good christian people of all denominations are continually supplicating Him for peace, and a cessation of strifes and wars, and He, a prayer hearing and a prayer answering, loving Father permitting them, would be incompatible, but the truth is, that our supplicating and praying will not induce God to take upon Himself the burden and responsibility to control us—we are not His slaves."

"God made us with a conscience that tells us when we do wrong, and if we do not heed the warning we deserve to be punished."

"It is true, God made us with a conscience, but we were made children, so when does the responsibility begin?"

"The responsibility begins the moment that we know what is right and what is wrong; the

moment conscience tells us a thing is wrong, when we do a wrong thing."

"But the present Church teaches that we are born sinners, born in sin, and that nothing unclean can enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

"Yes, I know, and isn't that silly talk? An innocent child, unable to talk, unable to conceive an evil act, unable to comprehend a wrong, the child knows nothing nor ever did anything, is a sinner in the sight of God. No, never."

"The child is a sinner because the human family is sinful, but God does not hold the child responsible. The child will be saved."

"I understand, it has no sins of its own, but some one else sinned and it must share a part of the blame; it had the misfortune to be born of parents belonging to a sinful human family. Could anything more ridiculous be conceived?"

"The child is not held responsible for inbred sin, but it is evident that it has inherited a sinful nature for its inclinations are to do evil."

"Nothing of the kind. If the child is properly trained it will not do evil deliberately. The innocent child does wrong but not that

it realizes that it is doing harm; it does it innocently."

"What kind of a child would that be that did everything just right?"

"The examples and environments may lead a child to do evil and be aware that it is doing wrong. The child must be properly reared, but God is not cruel that He looks upon the erratic babe as a sinner, disabuse your mind of that."

At this time we went home.

At the next discussion the foreman was again with us and said:—"We are all sinners and must pray daily for forgiveness."

"How is that?"

"If God hears our prayers and is able to lead us, He should lead us so that we would not do evil."

"If He leads us, there surely ought to be some good, but they all confess that they must implore forgiveness daily."

"The fact is, He does not lead us."

"And many forget as soon as they are outside of the Church, that the all-seeing eye of God is above them, and indulge in all kinds of excesses, and in vulgarity and brutality. They go to Church and profess

to worship God, but have no reverence for God."

"Heathens of this class are the most difficult to convert."

"Our religion should be such, that we would render to God the same service, of a right life, as we expect our fellow men to do in dealing with us, to deal justly, to render to us justice. The conception of God is that He is in Church, and if the ceremonies there are performed all right, He is satisfied. Just think of the small conception of God, or make it, notice the small God some people have."

"The poor, innocent infant babe cannot go to Heaven unless it has been sprinkled with water by some prelate. What a small conception of God, to think that He was so absurd as to exclude from Heaven any one unless baptized, but much more so the innocent infant. To imagine that it required water to be dipped on its head by some prelate, or our kind Heavenly Father, Who is no respector of persons, will give it over to Satan to be cast into the fiery furnace forever. That is only a foolish notion. And to think some of our best educated people, preach for denominations whose members claim this to be a fact."

"I admire your courage in expressing your convictions. You are rather severe on the preachers, but I am convinced that you mean it for the good of the people."

"Yes, sir! I am trying to teach the people the truth. Notice the conception that the most people must have of God, by their actions, not by profession, and this they must have learned from their clergy. Their little God is in the Church watching the ceremonies; if these are performed all right, He is satisfied. Just think of the small God they have, the Jews as well as the christians. Such a small God some people have, that He will be offended if they eat certain things on certain days. It is a sin to eat certain meats at any time. Foolishness! Some people will have the Ruler of the Universe to be so small that He will bar us from Heaven if we make the mistake of observing the wrong day for Sabbath worship. God will be offended if we wear certain kind of apparel, or if we shave, or if we do not shave. Only simple people can harbor such thoughts. Then some of these Church members want to laugh at the Chinese queue and wide sleeves required by their gods. I know such foolish things are done and believed and

seem to be too absurd for credulity, but they infer from what they read in the Bible that they must do so. But some of the important things in the Bible they neglect to observe, things that our conscience tells us should be observed."

"The Bible is what the conscience of those men that wrote it, revealed to them as being God's will, and this is just what our conscience reveals to us that it is. I cannot believe that it was to them God's word. Their conscience convictions combined with ours should impress us with the importance, the necessity of having Churches, places of worship. We can be glad that we have the Bible and we should study it and compare it with our own conscious convictions. It should be sufficient to deter us from doing evil, and the object of the Church should be to teach and preach, warning the erratic of the danger of incurring the displeasure of our Heavenly Father. The Church should get over the old barbaric idea that God is like the despotic monarch, that He required a bloody sacrifice before relenting, and adopt the more intelligent idea that He will permit no evil doing."

"The barbaric heathen sacrificed animals

and sometimes human beings to appease their offended gods. The Jews were continually sacrificing cattle to gain the favor and blessings of God. Their feasts were noted for the amount of cattle slain and offered, but that an enlightened and civilized people, calling themselves christians, should teach that God demanded blood, demanded a life as an atonement for sins, is entirely too absurd for credulity. That God, seeing the blood of His own Son, will pardon the criminal for His Child's sake, does not belong to an enlightened and civilized age. Civilization could not tolerate such bloody deeds by its Monarch, much less will a kind Father, our Heavenly Father, desire such a thing. It is an entirely too low a conception of God, to think that we could by bloody sacrifice influence the great Ruler of the Universe."

The foreman here interrupted the speaker saying:—"Come, boys, the car is waiting."

CHAPTER XI

At our next meeting that we discussed this subject the foreman was with us again. He started out by saying:—"You say future reward and future punishment awaits us. Do you think God will deliver us into the hands of the devil to torment us in Hell-fire throughout all Eternity?"

"No, certainly not, and what kind of a being is the devil anyhow? I do not believe in a devil. Future punishment does not imply just exactly punishment after death, and surely not in death, yet it may mean in a future life. The same with Heaven; the dead cannot enjoy Heaven, and the Kingdom of Heaven must begin in this life according to the parables of Jesus, and according to common sense. The sower did not sow after death, the tares were not sown after death, the harvest did not come after death, the pearl of great price was not found after death, the same with the treasures in the field, it was not found and the field bought after death. We may have

Heaven in a future life, but not in death, and we surely can have Heaven to begin in this life. The Heaven that some people expect to enter after death is another absurdity. A City having walls of stone, jasper-stone walls, pearly gates and golden streets; this implies houses, and a river running through it with trees on either side, and yet on no planet or star, no foundation. This City has a throne, and God sits on the Throne, and Jesus on His right hand —two persons. How many billions of people have already died is hard to say, and how many more will die before the end of the world is hard to say, but surely the City must be very enormous, unless only one sect is permitted to enter; in that case, the other place must be enormously big."

"And how long would such a place be Heaven to us? Such a Heaven is the conception of the continually persecuted. The Jews, having been robbed of country and freedom, expected that a just God would give His people a place free of torment and persecution. The Church has adopted this idea, and each denomination assures its members that they, if they lead a righteous life, will ultimately occupy the City."

"But the Church with its sacred songs, and moral instructions, rouses in us the Divine."

"I cannot understand you; one time you condemn the present Church and directly you laud it."

"I have never condemned the Church, but I say it teaches some things that are not true. If we had never had the present Church with its moral training and sacred music and its associating for mutual benefit, rendering service to God as it understood it, civilization would be almost unknown. It is this close intimacy, and intermingling with each other, this learning of each other, as much as religion, that has advanced civilization."

"But religion led to associating."

"It is these bands of brotherhood, these Church denominations with all their auxiliary bands, and all other societies that have been great factors in advancing civilization."

"The beautiful sacred songs, expressing heroic sacrifice for fellow man and love and fealty to God, appeal to us for kindness toward each other."

"Those songs, in which we express the heroic efforts of the Church to enlighten and teach the

heathen and liberate the slave, and rescue the perishing, and alleviate the pains and suffering of the sick and poverty stricken, move us to deeds of kindness. The savage, cruel nature cannot remain in the heart of the man that is continually under the influence of the sweet music of the Church. It reveals to us God's love toward us in creating us with the mental capacity to produce such sweet music, and the many wonderful musical instruments."

"It is therefore evident that even if the Church has taught some things that cannot possibly be truth, it certainly has done a most wonderful amount of good. We see God's hand in leading us by certain laws of nature, through the all different forms of worship from the savage to the civilized, from idol worship to christianity. But while I cannot understand how we can consistently ask God to help us and to lead us, I do think it is our duty to acknowledge His goodness and thank Him for His many blessings. We certainly are dependent on Him for everything. If He would command nature to cease in any of its functions it would be fatal to us."

"Is it not our duty, then, to ask Him to protect us?"

"I do not think that is necessary. He will always protect His own creatures."

"Do you think man could do as he pleased even if God did not wish him to do so?"

"God is almighty and could stop us when we do wrong, but He does not do so."

"The Man that had a legion of demon-devils. Was he in the hands of the devil of his own free will?"

"He certainly was, but when the demons left the man and entered the herd of swine, and the swine ran into the water and were drowned, the demons were left to enter into some other individual again, for surely they were not drowned. This is just another absurd story. There is no devil. If that story were a fact, it would not have left the demons to do evil again. If Jesus had been the Creator of all things, Satan included, He could also be the destroyer of all things, including Satan. In that case Satan, or the demons, would have been entirely destroyed and not permitted to do evil again."

"And when we read the story of how Satan led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted, we must confess that those two stories do not

agree. Satan driven by Jesus, Jesus led by Satan. Certainly somewhat confusing."

"These stories are indeed perplexing and lead me to look at it as you do. If the Bible really was God's word, it would not have any difficulties for us to understand."

CHAPTER XII

THE NEXT time the subject was broached the young miner said:—"Let me show you the inconsistency of prayer. Man prays for God's help, and God will help Him. The resolution to ask God to assist him to become good he must form of his own free will, for he is a free agent and God does not assist him until he expresses a desire to have God's assistance. But the very moment that the resolution is conceived in the mind, and the desire expressed, God assists him."

"Before the resolution was formed he was a sinner, for by nature we are all sinners, we are born sinners. He was therefore in Satan's service and under his control."

"No, he wasn't under Satan's control or Satan would not have permitted him to form the resolution to be good."

"Yes, he must have been under his control, but he always retains the power to leave the service of Satan. That is, Satan's control over him is so feeble that Satan can do nothing

with him unless he is willing. Really, Satan has no control over him at all, only just what he is willing to yield to him. Satan can't compel him to do anything unless he is willing. Satan can only help him when he is willing. He can never surrender his freedom to Satan. Man is always a free agent. If he could surrender his freedom to Satan he would forever after be in Satan's control, and could never leave his service. He was, therefore, not under Satan's control when he formed the resolution to serve God."

"I understand the difficulty you have placed Man in by your argument. I must admit it must be impossible for either God or Satan to have control of Man."

"Man can do as he pleases in the choice of a Master. No, he is a free agent and cannot surrender to any Master. If after he has prayed to God for help, and He has answered His prayer for help, and has taken possession of him, and has him in His control, and he can then turn away again at his pleasure, he never was in God's control; God never answered his prayer."

"But such a thing as Satan does not exist."

"We can make ourselves devils if we choose. Or we can make ourselves saints if we choose.

It is all in our own hands—we are our own Masters."

"So you hold that our prayers for help avail us nothing?"

"God has made us free agents and He does not interfere with our freedom, implore we ever so much. It is our duty to control ourselves, and if we neglect to do so, and displease our Heavenly Father, He is justified in punishing us, just as we are justified to punish our children when they do wrong."

"It is cowardly to shirk our duty."

"Another absurdity is the temptation of Jesus by Satan, in the wilderness. Jesus, one of the Triune God, the Creator, is tempted by one of His own creatures. Would God permit that? The Almighty or was it the human, anyway, it was Jesus, is tempted, and what was it for? It seems just as silly an expression as could be framed or found in the Bible. If He was tempted to reveal to Him to what temptations the human family was subject, it was a failure, for the Almighty God knew that from eternity, for He is omniscient, and the human had no need of knowing it, for the prayers are to the Divine."

"I understand. It certainly was a strange

thing to assert and most difficult to explain. What is your opinion of it?"

"It is my opinion that the writers expected it would help the poor fallen sinner to a stronger faith in a merciful Savior, Who knew the temptations that led him to fall."

"That is it, and is that not right?"

"No, that is a false hope. We have no right to sin. We have no right to commit crime, and expect pardon. The Bible contains errors, but it contains the opinions or the conscious convictions of the writers, and much of it coincides with our convictions."

"Does not the Koran do the same thing?"

"The Koran is the opinion of a different class of people but in many points it coincides with our opinion. All those so-called sacred writings contain some good instructions and have been stepping stones in our upward progress from darkness into light. But they all have assertions and requirements that can not be from God, just the same as the Bible. Here is another absurdity about the temptation. It reads:—'Satan led Jesus.' In that case it must have been the human, not the Divine Jesus he led. And Jesus became hungry, He fed four thousand, having nothing wherewith

to do it, could he not have fed Himself? In this case it must have been the human Jesus. The Divine could help Himself. But forty days is too long a fast for the human; it must have been the Divine that fasted. But God never gets hungry; it must therefore have been the human. This is perplexing. We are not positive that His hunger was appeased then, but He, being God, could satisfy Himself."

"But just now Satan sets Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, not the Divine, but the human Jesus. Why the Divine does not resist this, is hard to say."

"This certainly is a very perplexing question, and most difficult to understand. In consideration of these conditions, might it not perhaps be better not to study the Bible?"

"Oh, yes, we should study it to learn what the opinion of those people of that early time was, but not as God's word. If God had ever spoken to Man, He would have made it so plain that there could not be the least doubt about his wishes, and our duty toward Him."

"But after all, God is the Supreme Ruler."

"Everything is just as He intended it should be, and not as some would have us believe, that the devil was able to frustrate God's plans and

designs. There is no devil or Satan. In religion, each one should strive to know just what God desires of him. It is too vital a question to neglect to study. We cannot afford to depend on what others say. Instruction is all well enough and is very necessary, but it is our duty in this matter to search and study so as to learn if the instructions we are receiving are trustworthy."

"Are we doing our duty toward our Maker? Does our conscience approve of the way we are living? Are we doing our duty toward ourselves?"

"The whole Universe is God's word. All nature proclaims and reveals to us a Creator, or a first Cause—God. Everything is perfect in God's creation; the movements of the planets are harmonious and exact to the second; the earth revolves in exactly the same time today as it did yesterday, nor does it vary any in a thousand years; all proclaiming an omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent Supreme Ruler. All God's works are perfect, but the Bible is not, and therefore cannot be His work."

"Are there more inaccuracies that you can mention?"

"The barren fig tree is another, and there are many others. We are told that Jesus—God—in not finding figs on the tree, blasts it, but if he really was hungry it would have been just as easy for Him to cause the tree to be loaded with ripe figs, and in that way have some to eat for Himself and many others that might be hungry and passing by the tree."

"The expression makes it appear as if Jesus had been offended and in His vindictiveness blasted the tree, a thing that we cannot conceive of Jesus, either Divine or human."

"That is true; it does not seem to have been the spirit in which He did things."

"No, it was not, it was contrary to what He was trying to impress upon Nicodemus when He said:—'You must be born again'."

At this point we went home, and when we met again to speak on this subject he said:—"The strange thing that happened in the case of the blasted fig tree was Jesus the human became hungry, and finding no figs on the tree, Jesus the Divine—God—comes to His assistance to get satisfaction out of the failure of the tree in not supplying the want."

"Why are these stories, which are asserted to be God's word, God's laws by which we are to

govern our lives in order to please Him, so imprefect that we continually commit the great crime of doubting them to be such? If it were God's word, if God spoke them through the writers, then they should be so plain and comprehensive that the fool could not err, but would understand and not doubt."

"That is a fact, but we have some more such stories that seem strange. Jesus the Divine calms the storm and walks on the water, assisting Peter to do the same, but soon becomes hungry and asks His disciples, 'Have you anything to eat?' Here again we have the two, the Divine and the human in the same body, making use of the different organs and members of the body, so that it is most difficult to say which controled it. When John was beheaded, Jesus was afraid of his safety. God afraid of Man. The fish in the water obey Him and fill the net until it is overloaded, but He fears the people and does not remain in Galilee. Jesus could turn water into wine, or grape juice, but if Jesus had been indeed the all knowing God He would not have stirred up such a controversy as this wine making has done."

"Jesus could heal all manner of diseases,

and had a wonderful power over Men, swaying them to do just what he desired them to do, without even speaking to them; as an instance is the man that gave his ass to the disciples of Jesus for Him to ride into Jerusalem, but He could not change the minds of Judas Iscariot and those Jews that sought to kill Him."

"I admit the Bible is full of such miracles, the Old as well as the New Testament, that seem improbable."

"Yes, in the Old Testament we have the burning bush, the smitten rock, the indestructible apparel, the daming of the water of the Jordan to permit the Israelites to pass over, the fall of Jerico and many more."

"If God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forevermore, they cannot be true or miracles would happen to-day as they did then."

"If such things had occurred, as the water daming up in the Jordan Valley without any visible obstruction to keep the water back, it would never have been forgotten; all the people would have known about it: throughout all Europe and Asia, it would have been known. But as it is, only the Bible narrates the strange phenomena. If Jesus was God and could

restore Lazarus to life after the process of decay had so far advanced that an offensive odor was perceptible, when the tomb was opened, and if He could bring Himself to life again, it is not reasonable to think that He could not prevent the mob from crucifying the human body."

"But the crucifixion was not a sacrifice if the Divine did not suffer."

"The Divine Savior must suffer to make Him compassionate toward the sinner."

"But how could the Divine suffer in the crucifixion?"

"Or was the crucifixion necessary even if the Divine did suffer?"

"The Divine or God, could save the sinner without such a horrible spectacle."

"It goes to prove that He never was God, and the narrative is only a myth like all other strange legends."

"I have no doubt that Jesus was crucified for having expressed His convictions about the sinful licentiousness and immoral lives of His Jewish brethren."

"There is nothing more ennobling than to read the stories of the self-sacrificing and heroism of some of the Bible characters."

"You do not think that reading the Bible would be harmful?"

"Reading the Bible may be harmful to the child, but never to the intelligent adult."

"It is the humanity taught in the New Testament that makes the christian religion the most desirable of all forms of worship. Not only should we perpetuate this noble work, but we should seek still higher planes of humanity and brotherly love. We cannot discard the Bible but must ever have it as a guide, and we must follow the examples of its good men as they are given to us in the Bible. We must lead a Christ-like life in order to escape future punishment."

"You might as well accept everything as the church has it now, if you want to insist on a similar life."

"No, indeed, the present Church preaches pardon for sins; the new Church will insist on a pure life."

At this time we left for home.

CHAPTER XIII

At our next discussion I put this question:- "What in your opinion was the object Jesus had in view?"

"Jesus was a self-appointed reformer. His object was to establish a universal brotherhood and banish barbarity, immorality and all other evils. But Jesus was not God manifested in the flesh as some would have us believe."

"If God had desired at any time to become visible, or assume a human body, He could not have conceived a more foolish way to do it than to be born of a woman. He that could call the planets into being out of chaos, could place himself as a visible being on a cloud or at midday appear in the bright, clear sky as a Man."

"Nothing is impossible with God. Can an intelligent man imagine anything more inconsistent than God the Almighty as a helpless child?"

"But those licentious Jews imagined that

God must be like they were and therefore have a woman and child."

"It seems very strange that intelligent people could imagine that God could possess such human attributes, natures, passions or desires for the opposite sex. But they were not intelligent enough to comprehend the difficulty this put them in when it came to explain all about this mystery."

"They were aware that if Jesus was to be only a Son of God, He would not be much different from any other human being. He must be much more; He must have a share in the government of the universe. He must be more than God's servant for we all are, or ought to be His servants. So He is proclaimed as one of the Triune God, the Son of God, but co-eternal with God, if that can be possible. He was not only co-existent with God, but He was the Creator of all things, and will be the final Judge of the human family."

"That is the doctrine of the Church, but I must confess it is very perplexing to me."

"The idea that Jesus was the Creator and will be the final Judge gives Jesus very great power. He becomes everything to us."

"And again, by His death He became our

Redeemer, so that we are not so much responsible to God as to Jesus."

"It is this, that in some instances He is God and in others He is the Son of God, and in others He is only a human being that perplexes me."

"I know, but the Bible teaches it that way, and the Church prohibits its members from investigating. To say that the people of this age have not advanced far enough in intelligence to know that it is all myth, would be placing a very poor opinion on their intelligence. It would be an insult to our educators and placing our education at a very low rate."

"But the worst is, that the Church often, in the fear of losing its hold upon the people, stands in the way of progress. It proclaims that it is a sacrilege to doubt the word of God. But in spite of the Church and what it teaches, the people are becoming more enlightened every day, and many have learned to know the truth."

"If faith in an atonement made for us by Jesus, if faith in the power of Jesus, if faith is the essential to our salvation, then faith in a conditional pardon offered by God to repenting

sinners should also be sufficient, without the atonement of Jesus."

"But faith is not the essential, but a correct life."

"Our eternal destiny is entirely in our own hands, and no one can rob us of it; no one can hinder us from going to God; and no one can do it for us. We must satisfy our own conscience by our own mode of life, and by our mode of worship. The essential is a pure life, sincerity, a pure motive, and a kind heart, honesty and integrity."

"Our religion should seek to guard and protect the child. Bringing children into the world that are deformed, idiotic, weaklings and fit for the grave only is one of the greatest sins. Such children can only be born of weak parents, made so by self-abuse or by poverty, which is abuse by others. Why man should be so desperately wicked is to us inexplicable, but it is very clear that religion is intended to rectify and prevent such evils. A religion that does not seek to banish such evils is not christianity. Teach the child in the way it should go and insist that it does go in that way, and as an adult it will practise what it has been taught. True religion is embraced by a

person only when he or she resolves in his or her heart and carries the resolution into effect, that he or she will be his or her brother's keeper. To do this, requires that we make every effort to have our neighbors' children educated. Only the educated and skilled can help themselves."

"Is it just that I pay tax to educate my neighbor's child?"

"Universal education benefits all. If we desire to live in an intelligent community, we must be willing to help each poor child to become intelligent."

"Most of our criminals are such because they cannot help themselves; they lack education or are not skilled in doing that which has fallen to their lot to do. They need help."

"When once a people is educated sufficiently to know that it is a crime to make criminals out of its young people, it will turn and help all its young people to an education and to to an ability to help themselves. But at present, instead of educating the young people how to take care of themselves and make an honest living, we teach them by our examples that crime is not wrong."

"Very often our young people are forced to remain ignorant by poverty."

"The parents are so pauperized that the children are compelled to stop school in order to assist the parents to gain a living. We have our prisons full of Church members, not christians, who are there for all kind of crimes and that will attend Church again as soon as they are released, and that will be in good standing the same as before the crime was committed that sent them to jail. The Church will re-instate them but not reform them."

"Some Churches may require some penance to obtain pardon, but no effort will be made to help them to reform and to be able to live right. Many, as soon as they have made it all right by going to Church a few times, are ready to commit the next crime, and another term in jail. Those who are in prison for life or for such terms that they have no hope of ever getting out, send for their pastors to prepare them for Heaven."

"What a horrible influence on our children, to read in the paper how the murderer was in prayer with his pastor all night just before his doom, and now he professes to realize that

God for Jesus sake has pardoned him, and now he is sure of going to Heaven."

"In many instances the inhumanity of the Church member is the indirect cause of crime. Heathenism would often be preferable to such christianity. A christianity that breeds robbers and pauperizes certain classes to enrich other classes, and that is the indirect cause of many crimes, is a menace to civilization."

"We look at such criminals and recognize that they are human, and if they are human they are our kin, our brothers and if they are our brothers, we are their keepers, responsible for their waywardness."

"It rests with the Church, with the christians who should love his neighbor as himself, to help his neighbor before he is by neglect driven into crime."

"I sometimes think that perhaps in many cases it would perhaps be better if they were still barbarians."

"They might be filthy then, but they would at least have an equal opportunity for self-support."

"Imagine a lot of vagrants or some families in the slums, and let us be honest about it, and say the productions of christian civilization,

it cannot possibly be enlightened civilization. A condition that possesses all the unfathomable degradation of vagrantism, a brutalized humanity so disgusting that it is difficult to find adequate language to describe it is not civilization. Or, if we call that civilization which but divides the human family into two classes, the one of opulence and respectability and the other of pauperism and degradation, our civilization and our christianity are an evil, and worse than savagery. If such is christian civilization, it should be suppressed for on examining both classes, we find they are inhuman and brutal. The one class is brutal in habits and the other in inhumanity, so that it is difficult to say which is the worse."

"The new religion will rectify all this. It will elevate the pauper to the position of a brother where he belongs; in fact it will educate and assist the young people so that they become useful citizens able to help themselves, and not permit them to fall. Poverty and ignorance will be banished and every man will be made a respectable and useful citizen if possible."

At this time the talk was ended by the car that took us to the surface.

It was only a few days after this that there

was an accident in our young friend's breast.

This time it was himself that was injured by a fall of coal. His leg was badly fractured. Sympathetic friends quickly gathered and in a very short time he was hoisted to the surface, and quickly removed to his home.

The doctor was there at the same time and soon had the fracture reduced and properly bandaged and he was made as comfortable as possible. As soon as the doctor had finished, he started to hunt up the "buddy" and when he found him he said to him:—"I have put that leg in good shape, and in six or eight weeks it will again perform its duties. But it was not the leg of a man but that of a woman that I bandaged." The injured one heard what he said and quickly called him back but all in the house gathered to hear what was said.

"Let me explain this matter. It is true what the doctor says, I am a woman, and since you all have heard what was said, I would be very, very much pleased to have some one take down my statement and have it published in the newspapers so that the world will know the truth and can judge me for itself. This is the result of the present condition of what we are

pleased to call christianity. We, my husband and myself, both came from England, I, the daughter of wealthy Catholic parents, well educated, such education as the church prescribes, and furnishes, my husband also of well-to-do parents, well educated, but Protestant and bitter against the bigoted Catholics. This condition of christianity that professes to 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' had compelled us to forsake home and parents and comfort, and become almost outcasts to become man and wife. We were determined that no such superstition and ignorance should keep us from being married. It was not a very agreeable thing for me to do to assume the rôle of miner, but I was determined that we should rise above the pauper class. We laid by sufficient to live more respectable in the future. And now, before I leave you my friends, for you know I can never meet you again in the mine, I desire to reiterate that I believe that the criminal will, in all cases, be punished and never pardoned. We are going away to where we are not known and forget this mode of life."

One of the miners said:—"It is the unanimous wish of all here that you remain here as

our teacher; you shall have adequate remuneration."

"I could not face the people, but I will write for your benefit a long address and have it published for your benefit, so farewell."

The address appeared in the paper, but they disappeared and were never heard of after.

Thus in the very life of this helper friend of this mining community was discovered the greatest proof of her sincerity, the strongest argument upholding the doctrines she exposed, and a convincing illustration of the power of a bigoted Church to make for sorrow instead of joy. And we, who have never heard her voice, who have never felt the inspiration of her presence, may yet find in her recorded truths, a clearer and more helpful understanding of what the coming christianity will be.

END

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